



NJC PRESS RELEASE

- *2 Heads of Court recommended for compulsory retirement*
- *Two Judicial Officers suspended from office for one year without pay and placed on Watch-List for a period of two years thereafter*
- *Cautioned a Head of Court*
- *Seven Committees empanelled to investigate allegation of judicial misconduct*
- *Recommends 36 High Court Judges for Appointment*

The National Judicial Council under the Chairmanship of the Hon. the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Kudirat Motonmori Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun, GCON, at its 107th Meeting of 13 and 14 November 2024, sanctioned 5 serving Judicial Officers for various acts of misconduct.

Specifically, the Council at its meeting yesterday, suspended Hon. Justice G. C. Aguma of High Court of Rivers State from performing judicial functions for a period of one year without pay and also placed him on “Watch-List” for two years thereafter.

Also, Hon. Justice A. O. Nwabunike of Anambra State High Court, has been suspended from performing judicial functions for one year without pay and placed on “Watch-List” for two years thereafter.

The Council also recommended two Heads of Court for compulsory retirement over falsification of age. The duo of the Chief Judge of Imo State, Hon. Justice T. E. Chukwuemeka Chikeka and the Grand Kadi of Yobe State, Hon. Kadi Babagana Mahdi, were recommended for compulsory retirement for falsification of their ages.

The Council equally considered the Report of its Preliminary Complaints Assessment Committee, which considered a total number of 30 petitions, empanelled 6 Committees for further investigation. While 22 were dismissed for lacking in merit, two were *sub judice*.

The Council also empanelled a Committee to investigate all complaints and petitions against Hon. Justice O. A. Ojo, Chief Judge, Osun State.

The Council's findings revealed that Hon. Justice G. C. Aguma, committed acts of misconduct by aiding a litigant who obtained a judgment at the FCT High Court, Abuja, and filed a garnishee against judgement debtors in Bori Division of the High Court, Rivers State.

The Council finds that Justice Aguma failed to raise any query as to why the garnishee proceedings were brought to his Court in Bori for a money judgment that could effectively be enforced in Abuja.

That the judgment was delivered on 15 July 2020, at the High Court of the FCT, while the certificate of judgment was registered at Bori Division of the High Court of Rivers State on 16 July 2020.

The Council further finds that the speed with which the Hon. Justice Aguma took and granted the order absolute against the judgment debtors showed that he had an interest, especially as he failed to take into consideration the stay of execution of the judgment granted in favour of the judgement debtors by the Bwari High Court, which had been brought to his attention.

On the part of Hon. Justice A. O. Nwabunike of Anambra State, the Council found him to have breached the provision of Rule 3.1 of the Revised Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016.

He also failed to adhere to the principle of *stare decisis* from his different interpretation of the word “aspirant” and abused his judicial powers by granting *ex parte* orders without a Motion on Notice filed along with the Originating Summons.

Hon. Justice T. E. Chukwuemeka Chikeka was recommended to the Governor of Imo State for compulsory retirement with effect from 27 October 2021, while all salaries and allowance

received in excess by His Lordship from 27 October 2021 till date should be refunded to the Council.

The recommendation was pursuant to the findings of the Council that His Lordship has two different dates of birth; 27 October 1956 and 27 October 1958. However, 27 October 1956, appeared to be the consistent date of birth, but in 2006, the Chief Judge swore to an affidavit changing the date of birth to 27 October 1958.

Similarly, Council finds that Hon. Kadi Mahdi has 3 different dates of birth (10 December, 28 January and July) all in 1959, while his actual date of birth was 1952.

The Council held that Grand Kadi Mahdi committed an act of misconduct in violation of Rule 02908 (i) and (ii) of the Public Service Rules, 2021 and ought to have retired from service 12 years ago.

The Council, therefore, resolved to recommend Hon. Kadi Babagana Mahdi for compulsory retirement to the Governor of

Yobe State and that he should refund all salaries and allowances received for the past 12 years.

The Council at its meeting, also issued letter of caution to Hon. Justice I. A. Jamil of Kogi State to be more circumspect in handling sensitive matters in the future.

The Council further resolved to issue letter of caution to Hon. Justice J. J. Majebi, Chief Judge, Kogi State, for assigning a sensitive matter to a junior Judge on the Bench.

The Council also deliberated on 4 petitions against Hon. Justice Peter O. Lifu of the Federal High Court, Abuja as follows:

Petition by Mr Douglas W. Chukwu, the Secretary of the Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission against Hon. Justice Lifu was discountenanced, as the petitioner who had earlier indicated interest to participate in the hearing of his petition failed, neglected and refused to appear before the Committee.

The Council also finds that the allegations of inducement to the tune of \$1 Million, a bullet-proof car and gift of a plot of land

to Hon. Justice Lifu by Chief Emeka Beke, Chairman, All Progressive Congress, (APC), Rivers State were not substantiated in any form.

It was also found that the same parties who appeared before the High Court in Rivers State, also appeared before Hon. Justice Lifu at the Federal High Court in Abuja, but failed to disclose or bring to the notice of the Hon. Judge the existence of a sister case at Rivers State High Court.

The Council noted that the acts of misconduct alleged were actually perpetuated by the petitioners who filed the case at the Rivers State High Court, after the case at the Federal High Court, Abuja had been instituted, suggesting forum shopping.

Council finds that Hon. Justice Lifu neither exhibited personal interest in the matter nor misconducted himself in the procedure and noted that the complaints contained in the petition are now subject of appeal by the petitioners.

Similarly, Council dismissed the two petitions by Abednego Oli Benjamin, Chairman, Boot Party, Rivers State Chapter against Hon. Justice Lifu, as it finds the allegations of bribery and other corrupt practices against the Subject Judge were unsubstantiated. It also finds that there is no proof of misconduct in the *ex parte* orders made by the Subject Judge. Council also noted that the *ex parte* orders are now the subject of appeals.

On the petition by Dr. G. M. Giles-West Clark, Rivers State House of Assembly against Hon. Justice Joyce Abdulmalik of the Federal High Court, Abuja Division, the Council finds that the petition was not supported with a verifying affidavit and was therefore, discountenanced.

On the Petition against the Court of Appeal by Aham Eke-Ejelama, SAN, Council finds that the matters were cases that were commenced during vacation. It also finds that they were

urgent matters assigned to vacation Justices and that vacation Judges sit in Abuja.

Council also finds the assertion that the Appellants' Counsel applied to be heard in Abuja, is not correct as only a Head of Court can assign vacation cases. Consequently, Council dismissed the petition for lack of substance.

Council thereafter directed the President of the Court of Appeal should deal with the assignment of the appeals administratively in the normal course of business.

Also, the petitions against Hon. Justice Peter C. Obiora, JCA, formerly of Anambra State High Court and Hon. Justice I. S. Yerima, Chief Judge, Oyo State, were discontinued by the petitioners through notices of discontinuance served on the Council.

The Petition by Hon. C. Oforma Agbo JP against Hon. Justice Comfort C. Ani of the Enugu State High Court, was

investigated and no evidence of judicial misconduct was found against the Judge.

The petition against Hon. Justice Kabir Dabo, High Court of Justice, Kaduna State, by Alhaji Samaila Musa, was dismissed for being unmeritorious, as the Judge did not violate any law by issuing a bench warrant for the arrest of the petitioner.

Furthermore, the Petition by Hopeson Dike against Hon. Justice Stephen Dalyop Pam of the Federal High Court was discountenanced as the petitioner abandoned it and failed to honour Council's invitation.

While the NJC is ready to sanction erring Judicial Officers, it has a duty to protect them against unfounded allegations.

The Council resolved that Legal Practitioners who by themselves or in collusion with litigants write frivolous petitions to blackmail the Judicial Officers will be reported to the Legal Practitioners' Disciplinary Committee (LPDC) or the

Legal Practitioners' Privileges Committee (LPPC) for appropriate action.

Also, at the meeting, the Council recommended Thirty-six (36) candidates for judicial appointment to their various State Governors.

Those recommended for appointment are as follows:

EIGHT (8) JUDGES, HIGH COURT, OYO STATE

1. Opayinka, Adeniyi Gabriel
2. Oyediran, Oloyede Semiu
3. Oladejo, Olusoji Moses
4. Ademola-Salami, Oluwaseun Toluwanimi
5. Adesina, Jimoh Adam
6. Adekunle, Yemi Saubana
7. Adepoju, Olutola Jolade Adenike
8. Muraina, Olayemi Rasaq

FOUR (4) JUDGES, HIGH COURT, KEBBI STATE

1. Muhammad, Kwaido Hassan
2. Ibrahim, Umar Halima
3. Jagwadeji, Suru Lauratu
4. Muhammad, Nuruddeen

SEVEN (7) JUDGES, HIGH COURT, SOKOTO STATE

1. Haruna, Dogondaji Mariya
2. Sahabi, Jaredi Hadiza
3. Ahmad, Sha'aibu
4. Hassan, Fatima
5. Mohammed, Sa'idu Fatima
6. Muhammad, Nura Bello
7. Moyi, Abubakar

SIX (6) JUDGES, HIGH COURT, AKWA IBOM STATE

1. Ekanem, James Bassey
2. Umohandi, Mfon Winifred
3. Essien, Bassey Iwakaowo
4. Morrison, Henry Comfort
5. Ntekim, Edet Ekpo
6. Eddie, Julius Sharon

SEVEN (7) KADIS, SHARIA COURT OF APPEAL, SOKOTO STATE

1. Muhammad, Abdulazeez Yar'Abba
2. Lawal, Isa Abubakar
3. Bello, Sokoto Ibrahim
4. Imam, Abubakar Bello
5. Muhammad, Abibu Lawal
6. Ibrahim, Bodinga Umar
7. Kabiru, Marnona Umar

**TWO (2) KADIS, SHARIA COURT OF APPEAL,
KEBBI STATE**

1. Aliyu, Kabir, SAN
2. Bello, Muhammad Atiku

**TWO (2) JUDGES, CUSTOMARY COURT OF
APPEAL, OYO STATE**

1. Oyediran, Safiya Amope
2. Ojekunle, Ojeyemi Ademola

All recommended candidates are expected to be sworn in by their respective State Governors.

Kemi Babalola-Ogedengbe, Esq.
Deputy Director (Information)